**Amendments to the Specification:**

Page 22, line 21-page 23, line 13:

Fig. 22 shows the structure of the particulate filter 70, wherein Fig. 22(A) is a front view of the particulate filter 70 and Fig. 22(B) is a side sectional view thereof. As shown in these figures, the particulate filter 70 has an elliptic shape, and is, for example, the wall-flow type of a honeycomb structure formed of a porous material such as cordierite, and has many spaces in the axial direction divided by many partition walls 54 extending in the axial direction. One of any two neighboring spaces is closed by a plug ~~53~~ 52 on the exhaust gas downstream side, and the other one is closed by a plug 53 on the exhaust gas upstream side. Thus, one of the two neighboring spaces serves as an exhaust gas flow-in passage 50 and the other one serves as an exhaust gas flow-out passage 51, causing the exhaust gas to necessarily pass through the partition wall 54 as indicated by arrows in Fig. 22(B). The particulates contained in the exhaust gas are much smaller than the pores of the partition wall 54, but collide with and are trapped on the exhaust gas upstream side surface of the partition wall 54 and the pores surface in the partition wall 54. Thus, each partition wall 54 works as a trapping wall for trapping the particulates. In the present particulate filter 70, in order to oxidize and remove the trapped particulates, an $NO_x$ absorbent and a noble metal catalyst as platinum Pt, which will be explained below, are carried on both side surfaces of the partition wall 54, and preferably also on the pore surfaces in the partition wall 54, by using an alumina or the like.

Page 25, line 8-page 26, line 12:

By the way, the ability for absorbing $NO_x$ in the $NO_x$ absorbent has a limit. Therefore, before the ability saturates, $NO_x$ must be released from the $NO_x$ absorbent. Namely, before a current amount of $NO_x$ absorbed in the particulate filter 70 reaches the limit amount of $NO_x$ that can be absorbed therein, $NO_x$ must be released from the particulate filter

and the released $NO_x$ must be reduced and purified. For the purpose, a current amount of $NO_x$ absorbed in the particulate filter must be estimated. In the present embodiment, a map of amounts of $NO_x$ absorbed in the particulate filter per a unit time (A) in the low temperature combustion is predetermined as shown in Fig. 24(A). In the map, amounts of $NO_x$ absorbed in the particulate filter per a unit time (A) are set as functions of a required engine load (L) and an engine speed (N). A map of amounts of $NO_x$ absorbed in the particulate filter per a unit time (B) in the normal combustion is predetermined as shown in Fig. 24(B). In the map, amounts of $NO_x$ absorbed in the particulate filter per a unit time (B) are set as functions of a required engine load (L) and an engine speed (N). Therefore, a current amount of $NO_x$ absorbed in the particulate filter can be estimated to integrate these amounts of $NO_x$ absorbed in the particulate filter per a unit time (A) and (B). Here, when the low temperature combustion takes place in a rich air-fuel ratio, the absorbed $NO_x$ is released and thus an amount of $NO_x$ absorbed in the particulate filter per a unit time (A) become a minus value. In the present embodiment, when the estimated amount of $NO_x$ absorbed in the particulate filter becomes ~~move~~ more than a predetermined permissible value, the low temperature combustion is carried out at the stoichiometric air-fuel ratio or a rich air-fuel ratio, fuel is injected into the cylinder in the exhaust stroke, or the like, and thus the air-fuel ratio in the surrounding atmosphere of the particulate filter 70 is made stoichiometric or rich to regenerate the particulate filter. This condition is maintained till the regeneration of the particulate filter is finished. The smaller the air-fuel ratio in the surrounding atmosphere is, the shorter the period in which this condition is maintained becomes.

Page 27, lines 20-26:

Thus, if the $NO_x$ absorbent and the noble metal catalyst (which are referred to as a catalyst for absorbing and reducing $NO_x$ below) are carried on the particulate filter, the

particulate filter is effective to purify $NO_x$ in the exhaust gas and to prevent blocking of the particulate filter meshes with oxidizing and removing the trapped particulates.

Page 33, line 22-page 34, line 4:

The residual particulates 63 are gradually transformed into carbonaceous matter that can hardly be oxidized. Further, when the exhaust gas upstream surface is covered with the residual particulates 63, the action of platinum Pt for oxidizing NO and $SO_2$, and the action of the $NO_x$ absorbent 61 for releasing active-oxygen are suppressed. The residual particulates 63 can be gradually oxidized over a relative long period. However, as shown in Fig. ~~28(C)~~27(C), other particulates 64 deposit on the residual particulates 63 one after the other, and when the particulates are deposited so as to laminate, even if they are the easily oxidized particulates, these particulates may not be oxidized since these particulates are separated away from platinum Pt or from the $NO_x$ absorbent. Accordingly, other particulates deposit successively on these particulates 64. That is, when the state where the amount of emitted particulates (M) is larger than the amount of particulates that can be oxidized and removed (G) continues, the particulates deposit to laminate on the particulate filter.